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# Magazine Section

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"'You lie!' choked Hamilton. 'You—' Monte heard a deafening report, and felt a biting pain in his shoulder. Recovering, he threw himself forward and bore Hamilton to the floor."

## The Triflers

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FOR a man to keep himself consistently amused for ten years after his graduation from college, even with an inheritance to furnish ample financial assistance, suggests a certain quality of genius. This much Monte Covington had accomplished—accomplished, furthermore, without placing himself under obligations of any sort to the opposite sex. He left no trail of broken hearts in his wake. If some of the younger sisters of the big sisters took the liberty of falling in love with him secretly and in the privacy of their chambers, that was no fault of his, and did neither them nor him the slightest harm.

Such minor complications could not very well be avoided, because, discreet as Monte tried to be, it was not possible for him to deny certain patent facts, to wit: that he was a Covington of Philadelphia, that he was six feet tall and light-haired, that he had wonderfully decent blue eyes, that he had a straight nose, that he had the firm mouth and jaws of an Arctic explorer, that he had more money than he knew what to do with, and that he was just old enough to be known as a bachelor without in the slightest looking like one.

At the point where the older sisters gave him up as hopeless, he came as a sort of challenge to the younger.

This might have proved dangerous for him had it not been for his schedule, which did not leave him very long in any one place and which kept him always pretty well occupied. By spending his winters at his New York club until after the holidays; then journeying to Switzerland for

the winter sports; then to Nice for tennis; then to Paris for a month of gay spring and the Grand Prix; and so over to England for a few days in London and a month of golf along the coast—he was able to come back refreshed to his camp in the Adirondacks, there to fish until it was time to return to Cambridge for the football season, where he was still useful as a coach in the art of drop-kicking.

The fact that he could get into his old football togs without letting out any strings or pulling any in, and could even come through an occasional scrimmage without losing his breath, was proof that he kept himself in good condition.

IT was not until his eleventh trip that Monte became aware of certain symptoms which seemed to hint that even as pleasant a cycle as his could not be pursued indefinitely. At Davos he first noted a change. Though he took the curves in the long run with a daring that proved his eye to be as quick and his nerves as steady as ever, he was restless.

Later, when he came to Nice, it was with a listlessness foreign to him. In the first place, he missed Edhart, the old maitre d'hôtel who for a decade had

catered to his primitive American tastes in the matter of food-stuffs with as much enthusiasm as if he had been a Parisian epicure.

The passing of Edhart did more to call Monte's attention to the fact that in his own life a decade had also passed than anything else could possibly have done. Between birthdays there is only the lapse each time of a year; but between the coming and going of the maitre d'hôtel there was a period of ten years, which with his disappearance seemed to vanish.

Monte was twenty-two when he first came to Nice, and now he was thirty-two. He became thirty-two the moment he was forced to point out to the new management his own particular table in the corner, and to explain that, however barbarous the custom might appear, he always had for breakfast either a mutton chop or a beefsteak. Edhart had made him believe, even to last year, that in this matter and a hundred others he was merely expressing the light preferences of a young man. Now, because he was obliged to emphasize his wishes by explicit orders, they became the definite likes and dislikes of a man of middle age. For relief Monte turned to the tennis

courts, and played so much in the next week that he went stale and in the club tournament put up the worst game of his life.

That evening, in disgust, he boarded the train for Monte Carlo, and before eleven o'clock had lost five thousand francs at roulette—which was more than even he could afford for an evening's entertainment that did not entertain. Without waiting for the croupier to rake in his last note, Monte hurried out and, to clear his head, walked all the way back to Nice along the Corniche road. Above him, the mountains; below, the blue Mediterranean, while the road hung suspended between them like a silver ribbon. Yet even here he did not find content.

SO, really, he had no alternative but Paris, although it was several weeks ahead of his schedule. As a matter of fact, it was several weeks too early. The city was not quite ready for him. The trees in the Champs Élysées were in much the condition of a lady half an hour before an expected caller. The broad vista to the triumphal arches was merely the setting for a few nurses and their charges. The little iron tables were so deserted that they remained merely iron tables.

In an effort to rouse himself, he resolved to visit the cafés upon Montmartre, which he had outgrown many years before. That night he climbed the narrow stairs to L'Abbaye. It was exactly as it had been—a square room bounded by long seats before tables. Some two dozen young ladies of various nationalities wandered about the center of the room, trying their